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dialogue

The Staff Newsletter of the Ministry of Community and Social Services



Oxford, D'Arcy Place close

by Julia Naczynski

In 1974, MCSS assumed responsibility for all programs for people with developmental handicaps from the Ministry of Health. All governments of Ontario since then have actively supported the philosophy that people, regardless of physical or developmental disabilities, should not have to reside in institutions, isolated from family and everyday community activities. Gradually, under the Multi-Year Plan, our residential facilities have closed as

residents have moved into smaller, more home-like community settings. Since 1975, the number of people served in directly-operated residential settings has dropped from 8,000 to 2,200, while the number of those in community-service settings has grown from 4,600 to 50,000. Another chapter in the history of developmental services has been written with the Mar 31 official closures of D'Arcy Place in Cobourg and Oxford Regional Centre in Woodstock.

D'Arcy's people relocate near by



Cobourg Daily Star

The D'Arcy Place complex as it looks today.

Oxford staff, residents resettle



Photo: Brian Pickett

Neal Ambrose (centre of photo) supervises 15 income maintenance staff in the Woodstock Local Office; 12 of the IMO workers are former ORC staff who made a career change from residential facility to income maintenance. In the photo, seated: Wendy Tabor, Nora Anderson, Barb Boyd, Neal Ambrose, Julie Moson, April Howard, and Robin Barnes; standing: Jerry Ward, Aileen Mistrzak, Eva Ciszowski, Lindsay Koyle and Darlene Priestop.

At its peak, Oxford Regional Centre in Woodstock was home to about 1,500 people. In 1993 — year seven of the Multi-Year Plan — there were 244 residents at ORC. The remaining 20 residents moved out of Oxford during February and March; the last three moved to their new homes on Mar. 27. Most of the residents now live in small group homes and other residential settings in the London, Hamilton, Windsor and Waterloo

areas, says **Fred Loach**, ORC's acting administrator. The property has been put up for sale by the Ontario Realty Corporation; an environmental audit that will identify any constraints on future development is being done. Of the roughly 500 staff who have received surplus notices since 1992, about 300 have found other jobs with MCSS or other ministries. Others took advantage of retirement and severance

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At its peak, D'Arcy Place in Cobourg housed about 500 people with developmental disabilities.

On Mar. 31, MCSS terminated all residential programs, and community agencies, principally Christian Horizons, assuming responsibility for the remaining residents.

Under the Multi-Year Plan, which outlined the divestment of MCSS institutional programs to community-based organizations, D'Arcy was to have closed Mar. 31, 1994, notes administrator **John Hewitt**. But in 1992 the closure plan underwent extensive consultation, and the closing date was extended to this year in order to discharge the last 49 residents to existing service providers.

At the beginning of 1996, 27 residents remained at D'Arcy, says community planning manager **Heidy Vermeulen**. Service plans are in place for each resident and their needs are being served through Christian Horizons and the Central Seven Associations for Community Living.

Most former residents are living in traditional group home settings closer to their home communities, says **David**

Ross, program supervisor in the Peterborough Area Office. Two group homes are in Peterborough and another two are in Pickering; Oshawa, Cobourg and Port Perry also have accepted D'Arcy residents. These homes were developed in co-operation with the Ministry of Housing under Wave 3 Supportive Housing. A few residents have gone on to Family Home programs and to enriched supported independent living situations.

Of the 115 staff declared surplus, 25 resigned to begin new careers or to go to school, and four retired. Two-thirds of the staff (76) on surplus found jobs within the Ontario Public Service. Fully half of the staff placed within the OPS were able to secure jobs in the local area, so they didn't have to move, notes **Kevin Latimer**, formerly the human resources manager at D'Arcy who is now completing redeployment from the Kingston Area Office. A few former staffers are employed in the group homes where former residents live, and a handful are on contract to Christian Horizons, providing consultation as part of the residents' transition to group-home living.

Restoring operations after the strike

The first-ever strike in the Ontario Public Service ended after 35 days on Mar. 31.

Deputy Minister **Sandra Lang** and Minister **David Tsubouchi** wish to thank all ministry staff for their efforts in restoring MCSS operations after the strike. "We're aware of your professional dedication to clients, and we know that everyone was anxious to get back to our usual high level of service," said the deputy minister. "There's a lot of work ahead of us in the coming months and I know that people have worked hard to restore operations in our workplaces," said Mr. Tsubouchi. "I

appreciate your commitment to making sure that ministry clients receive the services they require."

For many of us, whether a member of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) or not, this was our first experience with a strike. There are about 67,000 OPSEU members in the OPS, which numbers about 81,000 employees.

The Association for Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario (AMAPCEO), which has about 5,000 members province-wide, also ratified a contract agreement — its first — on Mar. 19.

Business plan and cost savings

The ministry's efforts in its business plan and related cost savings measures for the next two years will affect about 919 positions at MCSS.

However, the ministry is committed to minimizing the impact on staff and hopes to continue its successful efforts with the management of vacancies, attrition and retirements, Deputy Minister **Sandra Lang** said.

The Apr. 11 interim report by **David Johnson**, Chair of Management Board,

indicated that the ministry will continue its downsizing and depopulation of facilities for people with developmental disabilities, further administrative streamlining and finding more effective ways to recover overpayments in the Family Benefits program.

These steps are part of the targets that were established in the government's Fiscal and Economic Statement of last November.



Dialogue goes quarterly

As part of cost-saving measures in the Communications and Marketing Branch, Dialogue becomes a quarterly publication with this first issue to be published in 1996.

Instead of being published 10 times a year, Dialogue will be issued four times per year. The next issue will be Summer 1996 (article deadline is May 24).

They've got the whole House in their hands



Hargy Randhawa (left) was the winner of an informal just-for-fun raffle of a gingerbread-house-sized version of the Legislative Building. The edible model of the "Pink Palace" was created by **Peter Watson** (right), the husband of Minister's Office staffer **Kathy Watson**. Peter, who has custom-designed gingerbread models of real houses, a church and a castle, decided the Legislature would make a good culinary challenge. Staff in the Minister's Office vied for the chance to take the "mini-Leg" home, which was later donated to the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.

...Oxford staff, residents resettle

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The grounds of Oxford Regional Centre.

packages. About 60 employees are on the surplus list and actively seeking employment.

ORC itself may close, but it will not be forgotten since many former staff are scattered throughout the southwest. In fact, a small band of "ORCers" has been established in Woodstock itself.

Prior to May of 1993, the ministry's presence in Woodstock, other than ORC, was a small probation office consisting of three probation officers and a secretary, a team of staff serving Oxford County's needs was located in the London Area Office. But the community's needs grew, so a local office was established on Simcoe Street which now includes income maintenance (IM) staff.

Of the 15 IM staff in Woodstock now, 12 are former employees of ORC who re-trained.

"One thing it proves is that people can certainly learn to do other things," says IM supervisor **Neal Ambrose**.

"The employees from ORC are doing a

super job at their new jobs here. I think it worked out great. It shows you can transfer your skills."



Brian Fiddell photo

Joanne Bell arrives for work at the Woodstock Local Office on Simcoe Street, seen in the background. Joanne is one of 12 income maintenance staff in the Woodstock office who used to work at ORC.

When eating is an effort

by Sue Upham, Chief Speech Pathologist, Rideau Regional Centre

Dysphagia is not a word most of us are familiar with. It means difficulty with swallowing, and many residents at Rideau Regional Centre in Smiths Falls have difficulties with feeding and swallowing.

To get some idea of what this might feel like, try this: take a mouthful of water, look at the ceiling and swallow. Next, try swallowing with your head to one side. Imagine how difficult life would be if swallowing was **always** that unpleasant and effortful.

Eating is, for many of us, an experience that we look forward to. In

fact, the act of eating is a sensory experience and food is one of life's pleasures.

The task of the dysphagia team at RRC is to respond to referrals of residents with feeding and swallowing problems. Dietary, occupational therapy, speech pathology, psychology, nursing and ward staff are involved with the dysphagia team, and usually two team members will observe a resident during one or two meals as part of an assessment.

Feeding and swallowing difficulties have a variety of causes, including neurological problems, degenerative conditions, aging and even medication side effects. Signs of swallowing difficulty may include choking incidents, coughing and spluttering during eating, difficulty or slowness to initiate the swallow reflex, food residue build-up in the cheeks, and particular difficulty or discomfort swallowing certain foods or fluids.

The dysphagia team makes feeding and swallowing easier and safer. Their recommendations may include improving the resident's position for feeding, changes in diet textures, use of adaptive equipment (such as a modified cup or spoon) or changes in the rate and technique of feeding.

Most of us look forward to our meals — and with the help of the dysphagia team, so can the residents of RRC and the caregivers who assist them at mealtime.



Sue Upham, Rideau's chief speech pathologist, conducts a feeding assessment as part of the dysphagia program.

Update on health and safety



The promotion of health and safety in the workplace is everybody's business. Last year, the ministry's joint health and safety advisory committee was busy promoting this "ounce of prevention" idea in a number of ways:

-The committee distributed a self-assessment checklist to local health and safety representatives as an update on the "DOs and DON'Ts" for effective joint committees.

-The committee exceeded its training targets set for the joint Ministry/OPSEU two-day orientation training.

This year, the committee's objectives will continue the prevention theme through ministry-wide training and regular features in Dialogue. Meetings with similar committees from sister ministries will be held to extend knowledge of best practices in prevention. Local committees at facilities will be provided with valuable

guidelines on universal precautions to help prevent blood-borne infections.

The committee will also actively follow up on ministry health and safety issues, and is prepared to meet or teleconference with local committees who require assistance. Information on workshops, issues and "best practices" will be shared with local committees.

Co-chairs **Michael Mayers** and **Richard Bradley** are enthusiastic about the commitment shown by local JHSCs and the health and safety representatives, and urge all staff to "make occupational health and safety your business."

For more information about the ministry's joint advisory committee on health and safety, get in touch with either of the co-chairs, Richard Bradley at 416-314-6921, or Michael Mayers at 416-730-1483.

Partners for children's health and learning

by Graham Cline



Some neighbourhood mothers get together for a "community coffee break." Simple, low- and no-cost programs like this, organized through Kids Count, are helping London neighbourhoods become better places for kids to live and grow up in.

In August of 1994, MCSS partnered with the City of London and Human Resources Development Canada in support of an innovative new strategy to improve the health and learning outcomes of children in 11 high-risk neighbourhoods.

Blending the best parts of a "bottom up" and "top down" strategy, Kids Count sees the people who live and work in these neighbourhoods identifying their own ideas and strategies to improve opportunities for area children. A resource steering committee (which includes our London Area Office manager, Peter Steckenreiter, the chief executive officers and other representatives of significant public and charitable organizations) stands ready to help whenever ideas and projects require some "extra neighbourhood" resources.

Unlike traditional "programs" with structures, policies and rules, Kids Count employs an "emergent design" approach (making it up as you go). Some simple ways that neighbourhoods are helping families

and children include read-aloud circles of adults who read to elementary-school youngsters to encourage a love of books; classrooms left open after regular school hours so children have a quiet place to study and do homework; and providing the use of donated computers and multi-lingual software to encourage computer literacy among children.

Kids Count is supported and framed by four central philosophies:

- Neighbourhood people are the real "experts" who drive the process;
- We can better utilize existing resources from all sectors;
- We should help develop and support sustainable strategies;
- Building and strengthening local leadership is essential.

With one staff, and virtually no overhead costs, the Kids Count project is a collaborative initiative that models the concepts it promotes.

In the first 18 months, almost \$400,000 in resources were leveraged

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Strategies for recovering from grief

by Jack Stiff, Communications and Marketing Branch

(Editor's note: This article concludes our coverage of Ongwanada Resource Centre's annual conference for professionals who work with people who have developmental disabilities. The conference theme was understanding and coping with grief.)

Denis Geneaux is chairperson of Bereaved Families of Ontario (Kingston), a support group. As a parent who lost two of his seven children through death, he strongly advocates attending support groups as a key method toward recovery and coping with grief.

Mr. Geneaux said that holding in grief can be damaging. He likened it to a balloon. "The more air you add, the greater the pressure. At some point the balloon will burst and be very damaging."

He also offered a simile for talking about one's grief as a release.

"Talking about your grief can be like a thrown ball; when a ball is thrown against a wall, it never comes back with the same intensity. As you talk about the loss, it too, will come back, but without the same intense feelings. The more a griever is able to talk about their loss, the less intense

the emotion becomes, and it becomes easier to move forward."

Support groups encourage talking about a loss, empowering grievers to move on, to better understand and cope, Geneaux explained.

For helping one's self through grief, Mr. Geneaux offered many ideas and suggestions. Among them: Be patient with yourself. Go gently; your body, mind and heart need energy to mend. Don't take on new responsibilities right away, and keep decision-making to a minimum. Ask for and accept help when you need it, especially from those close to you; don't hold the grief in because you "don't want to bother anyone else with your problems." Accept your feelings; it's okay to cry. Crying makes you feel better, and helps to heal. Remember that grief takes time," Mr. Geneaux adds.

Editor's note: In the December/January 1996 issue of Dialogue, a workshop at the Ongwanada conference on Grief and the Individual with Developmental Disabilities was co-presented by Janice Saunders, a residential supervisor, and Mauro Ruffolo, a community residence supervisor, both at Ongwanada.



Dealing with grief often means leaning on others for emotional support. Accept it when it is offered, and don't hesitate to ask for it.

Spending special time together at Project DARE

by Doug Winter, Project DARE



"Bill" and his mother prepare a meal at their snowbound campsite.

As the end of "Bill's" stay at Project DARE approached, he had a visit from his mom. It is not unusual for parents of students graduating from Project DARE's young offender wilderness program

to come for "graduation day." What was unusual was that Bill's mom came from her home in Orangeville a couple of days early especially to share a special experience with her son.

Bill was near the end of a 65-day young offender's program at Project DARE (Development through Adventure, Responsibility, Education). He had completed a long program full of major challenges: lengthy winter trips, early morning runs, November dips in the lake, and near the end, a four-day solo experience where he spent four days on his own in the bush near Algonquin Park, enduring nighttime below-freezing temperatures. Even more difficult, the challenge of working closely and co-operatively with eight other young men was at times overwhelming.

But the end of his time at DARE was to be something special for Bill and his mom, and something new for Project DARE. **Andy Hawkesford**, the

program's supervisor, suggested that it might be helpful for Bill to share something of his wilderness experience with his mother. Both were enthusiastic, and so it happened.

Bill and his mom spent a twenty-four-hour experience together camping out in the bush near Project DARE. They built a shelter, gathered firewood, cooked their meals, slept through the night, and most importantly, talked at length.

It turned out to be a powerful experience for both of them — one that neither of them will forget for a long time... a truly unique way to build a common bridge to the future.

Doug Winter is the manager of program services for Project DARE's residential programs in South River.

David Cope has taken an assignment with the Ontario Realty Corporation with its Accommodation Program Review Team. **Alfred Carr** has resumed his position as director of Financial and Capital Planning Branch.

Also in FCPB, **Cordelia Abankwa-Harris** is acting manager of Estimates and Allocations, replacing **Kevin French**, who has gone to Management Board Secretariat to become team leader for justice issues.

MBS is also the worksite for **Guy Searle**, who is on a one-year temporary assignment with its Computer, Information and Telecommunications Services (CITS) Branch, in customer service. **Greg Fujino** is backfilling for him in telecommunications at Information Systems Branch in addition to his duties as the main-frame operations co-ordinator. And **Tom Enright** has retired as manager in Ministry Systems.

News from the former Strategic Directions Division: **Alyne Bigwin** has left the ministry to pursue other opportunities in Saskatchewan. **Bryce Harper** has been seconded to the Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities Division's Social Assistance Programs Branch, where he is working on a number of management issues.

Mike Joseph has left the Facilities Management Section to go to a new position with the

Ministry of Transportation.

In the Minister's Office, **John Guthrie** is now the executive assistant to the minister. **Debra McCain** has also joined the Minister's Office as a policy assistant.

The Probation Services staff previously located in L'Original have a new address. They have relocated to 692 Main Street East, Hawkesbury K6A 1B4. Telephone number is 613-632-1171; toll-free it's 1-800-565-4431; fax is 613-632-6805. Update your Government of Ontario Telephone Directory on page 178.



Julie Nazymski photo

Ruth Davidson has left the building, as they say — and it was for the last time. Ruth officially retired from the Communications and Marketing Branch in February after 29 years with the branch, where she was a graphic designer and visual identity co-ordinator.

Also from CMB, **John Must**, an information officer, retired at the end of February.



Ways to save disk space

Management of your personal computer's hard disk environment is probably your responsibility.

When your desktop PC was initially configured by your local systems support staff, several software utility programs were installed to manage the PC hard disk environment. Individual users need to monitor disk use on a routine basis to ensure enough free space is maintained on the hard drive.

Today's software programs and systems consume a lot of available free space on the hard drive. To avoid running out of available storage space, which can affect the performance of your PC, several steps should be taken routinely to manage your hard disk space yourself.

Here's what you should do regularly:

- Old documents and files should be backed up to an external storage device (transferred to a disk) and then deleted from your hard drive.
- The Scandisk utility should be used on a regular basis to check for errors in file allocations, extensions, etc. that may be consuming disk space. Scandisk provides a quick and easy way to interrogate your files, programs and disk surface for problems, and in most cases repair any damage automatically.
- As you continually work with files and add, delete and change them,

the files become "defragmented," resulting in the loss of disk capacity.

The regular use of disk defragmenter is recommended to repair fragmented files and recover previously-unusable disk space and enhance system performance.

Defragmentation is obtained through the use of the DOS DEFRAG command.

- Doubleclick, or third-party hard disk compression utilities, can be used to increase your available free space on the hard drive. These utilities are very useful on older hardware with small hard drives. The use of a compression utility will effectively take the available free space on a drive and double it. You must consult with your local systems support staff before installing or activating a hard disk compression utility.
 - In those instances where available disk space is limited, and it's not cost-effective to buy a larger hard drive, you may choose to have your systems support staff review your use of Windows and other third-party software programs on your PC. Based upon this review, unused components may be deleted from your system to increase your available free disk space.
- For details on how to use these commands, ask your systems support staff.

...Partners for children's health

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to support various health and learning initiatives in these neighbourhoods, from a wide range of public organizations and other non-traditional partners.

While still in its infancy, the project is working well. At the very least, Kids Count offers a new and practical vision of how communities might do what they can to improve health and

learning opportunities for local kids.

For more information, call the London Area Office, or contact Kids Count directly at 519-433-8992.

Graham Cline is the co-ordinator of Kids Count: Partners for Children's Health and Learning. Its motto is Neighbourhoods Developing Programs for Children.

With thanks to Sheila Simpson, Program

In Memoriam: Lloyd Kishino



Long-time employee **Lloyd Kishino** passed away Dec. 23, 1995 at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto.

Lloyd retired from Information Systems Branch but was probably best known as the co-ordinator of Blue Jays Variety Kids Day, an annual event that brings as many as 5,000 children around the province to Toronto to enjoy a professional baseball game.

Many staff around the province have worked with Lloyd and transfer payment agencies such as children's aid societies to find young baseball fans and arrange their transportation to Kids Day. The Variety Club is a co-sponsor of Kids Day; the Blue Jays Baseball Club donates the tickets. The 14th annual Kids Day took place April 13.

Lloyd leaves his wife, Patricia, and children, Ashley, Thalia, Barrett and Andrew.

Contributions in Lloyd's memory may be made to the Variety Club of Ontario.

Learning about childhood depression

Child and Parent Resource Institute (CPRI) in London is hosting a day-long symposium on May 8. The workshop will focus on diagnosis, longitudinal perspective, treatment

and prognosis of depression in infants, children and adolescents. The cost is \$70 for those who register before Apr. 26, \$80 for registration after. For information, call 519-471-2540, ext. 2074.

dialogue

Ontario Community and Social Services

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